

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-14. (Canceled)

15. (New) A process for preparing a pearl based on expanded polymer and having a continuous skin, comprising the following successive steps:

a) extruding an expandable composition comprising a thermoplastic polymer and an expanding agent, in molten state, to effect expansion thereof, and
b) cooling and chopping the expanded material thus obtained.

16. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a gas that can disperse or dissolve in the polymer melt.

17. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a pore-forming agent.

18. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a volatile compound that can dissolve in the polymer melt.

19. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a chemical compound that can react chemically with the polymer by heating, to generate a gas.

20. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the polymer comprises a polyamide.

21. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expandable composition comprises a nucleating agent and/or a surfactant and/or a plasticizer.

22. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expandable composition comprises reinforcing fillers.

23. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the cooling during step b) is performed using a liquid.

24. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the pearl obtained has a diameter of less than or equal to 10 mm.

25. (New) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the pearl obtained has a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.8 g/cm³.

26. (New) A pearl comprising an expanded polyamide or polyester having a continuous skin.

27. (New) The pearl as defined by Claim 26, having a diameter of less than or equal to 10 mm.

28. (New) The pearl as defined by Claim 27, having a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.8 g/cm^3 .

29. (New) The process as defined by Claim 22, said reinforcing fillers comprise glass fibers, matting agents, pigments, dyes, heat or light stabilizers, bioactive agents, anti-soiling agents and/or anti-static agents.

30. (New) The process as defined by Claim 23, said liquid comprising water.

31. (New) The process as defined by Claim 24, said diameter being less than or equal to 5 mm.

32. (New) The process as defined by Claim 25, said mass per unit volume being less than or equal to 0.5 g/cm^3 .

33. (New) The process as defined by Claim 25, said mass per unit volume being less than or equal to 0.3 g/cm^3 .

34. (New) The process as defined by Claim 27, having a diameter of less than or equal to 5 mm.

35. (New) The process as defined by Claim 28, having a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.5 g/cm³.

36. (New) The pearl as defined by Claim 28, having a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.3 g/cm³.

37. (New) The pearl product of the process as defined by Claim 15.